



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
2181 Rayburn House Office Building ■ (202) 225-4527

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/edwatch>

July 25, 2001

IDEA Must be Fully Funded, But First it Must be Fixed

Congress must meet its commitment to fully fund IDEA, as some propose doing as part of this year's K-12 education reform effort. But before full funding of IDEA can be mandated, Congress must first move to fix serious, systemic problems with IDEA that have led to the over-identification of minority youth as disabled or mentally retarded.

Earlier this year, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard released a series of reports, including a report on the racial biases in special education and the over-representation of minorities in special education.

- One report found that African American children are almost three times as likely as white children to be labeled mentally retarded and placed in special education. It found that among secondary school students with disabilities, 75 percent of African American students, as compared to 47 percent of white students, are unemployed two years out of school.
- Another report found that while African American students may be over-represented in special education, they might be receiving less-relevant educational services and related services than white students with disabilities. For instance, the study found that white students with disabilities received twice as much occupational therapy and life training services than similar African American students.

Congress must first answer the question of why there is such an over-representation of minority students in the special education system in order to remedy the situation.

Message of the Day

IDEA is over-identifying minority children as disabled -- and it needs systemic reform before we can fully fund it.

- ❑ *Switching a program from discretionary spending to mandatory spending, which the Senate proposes to do with IDEA, imposes a major change that should not be implemented without fully considering its impact on all IDEA programs.*
- ❑ *President Bush has proposed a billion dollar increase in IDEA funding, but IDEA must be reformed so that this money can be spent effectively for those disabled children who need it the most.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- On Wednesday, July 18, a total of 99 Democrats joined 197 Republicans in voting to table a motion offered by Rep. John Baldacci (D-ME) to instruct House education conferees to adopt language passed by the Senate in S.1 requiring mandatory full funding of IDEA. (*Roll Call Vote No. 238, 18 July 2001*)
- Since the GOP took control of the House six years ago, Republicans have more than doubled IDEA funding, increasing it by 173 percent.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Our special education system has a big problem with the over-enrollment of minority students. Putting kids into special education simply because they can't read not only prevents them from reaching their full potential, it also robs children with real learning and physical disabilities of the federal dollars intended for them." **Education Secretary Rod Paige, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 1, 2001**